

Chai Minded Makes an Anonymous Donation to Temple Kol Tikvah

By Suzan Loeb

Reminiscent of the fictional John Beresford Tipton, Jr., the benefactor in a popular late 1950's television series, a modern day real-life benefactor recently gifted a \$10,188 check to Temple Kol Tikvah of Lake Norman in Davidson.

Unlike Tipton, this benefactor's identity is completely unknown.

What is known is that the donor oversees Chai Minded, an organization responsible for selecting synagogues and other Jewish organizations across the United States to receive its gifts.

According to its website, chai-minded.org, its mission is "... making anonymous contributions." Temple Kol Tikvah is one of 90 recipients to marvel at this generous albeit mysterious donation.

There is no way to apply to Chai Minded for consideration; there are no guidelines; no eligibility requirements; and no clues as to who is behind this generosity. The website states this individual attended services in numerous synagogues and recognizes that while each temple is unique, each provides a "spiritual haven"; and that nourishes the

benefactor's desire "to help as many of these communities as possible." Additionally, there are no specifications as to how the gift is to be used.

Temple Kol Tikvah is the egalitarian, innovative, caring, and diverse congregation of the North Charlotte area. It embraces interfaith couples, families of all forms, and anyone who seeks a deeper spiritual connection with Judaism. Part of a rapidly growing community, the synagogue is continually expanding its programming and service to the Lake Norman community. It engages seniors and religious school stu-

dents alike and offers social and religious gatherings as well as community events.

Slade Goldstein, the synagogue's president, stated in his thank you to Chai Minded, "Our congregation has been growing in leaps and bounds over the last years. We have initiated many programs with our growth both spiritually and educationally. Your gift helps us to continue the work we have begun."

Responding to Rabbi Shields's note of profound thanks for this gift to his temple, Chai Minded commends the Rabbi for his help in "building the Kol Tikvah com-

munity as well as the Davidson College Hillel. Not only is your religious school quite successful, but your calendar is filled with lots of activities at much larger temples."

As children, weren't we all warned by our parents to behave well because someone somewhere is watching us? Sounded ominous then, but in light of Chai Minded's generous offering, it is comforting and rewarding to know that someone did see and was moved by what Temple Kol Tikvah is doing. ☆

Temple Beth El: Relationships at the Center

Forming strong spiritual and personal relationships are at the forefront of all that is going on at Temple Beth El these days. From preschool to bar mitzvah families, teens to grandparents, TBE is a center for building purposeful and lasting Jewish relationships.

It's not that putting relationships at the center is a new concept; just that it has recently gotten some new press. A year ago, Dr. Ron Wolfson's book, *Relational Judaism*, took much of the Jewish organizational world by storm. Many clergy, executive directors, synagogue presidents, and dedicated lay leaders from across the denominations spent the better part of the summer trying to figure out how to translate Wolfson's insights and observations into something workable for their own communities.

In a May 2013, in a Jewish Telegraph Agency article Wolfson asks, "What is the value of affiliating with a Jewish institution?" He reminds us that the real purpose of a religious affiliation is to allow individuals to "build a face-to-face community of relationships that offers meaning and purpose, belonging and blessing." He argues that the job of synagogues can no longer be primarily to program and provide content, because similar high-level content is readily available on the Internet. Furthermore, programs at synagogues might produce short-lived benefits if the essence of the programming does not foster relationships between participants or with their clergy and staff. Rather than synagogues continuing to embark on program after program to engage congregants, they should shift their focus to actively building relationships.

At Temple Beth El, we know that Dr. Wolfson is right. We know that a catchy program title might encourage someone to participate for the first time, but real relationships cultivated on a personal level are what keeps that person engaged with the synagogue and with Jewish life. The TBE clergy and staff have been hard at work to make sure that the community we are building together at our synagogue is one that affords congregants as many opportunities as possible to build meaningful and purposeful relationships on a strong foundation of Jewish identity.

Rabbi Schindler feels that one

of the relationships which profoundly touch each and every one of us deals with times of great need, like an illness or a death. "Our senior adult community, SPICE, really understands what it means to support someone through a loss. At a meal of consolation following a funeral, not one of those SPICE participants will leave until the mourner is ready to go. They truly understand that their presence lifts up the spirit of the mourner. That is the essence of Jewish community."

Another relationship of ongoing importance is our strong connection with the people of Israel. Rabbi Schindler notes that Temple Beth El congregational trips to Israel are a continuing source of building these strong, lasting relationships. TBE participants who have travelled to Israel create bonds that last long after the trip is over. Israel trip participants regularly connect after the trip, especially to celebrate happy occasions and offer support in hard times.

TBE youth, especially our 8th-12th graders, recently took their abundant enthusiasm for reaching out and making relationships with others to URJ Camp Coleman for NFTY-SAR Spring Kallah. Sixty-six TBE young adults joined Dara Gever, director of Youth Engagement, on a trip to collaborate with their counterparts from all over the country and make the kind of friendships that bring lasting meaning into their lives. This was the largest participation by our TBE youth ever at a NFTY-SAR event. Rabbi Freirich, who was in attendance, said "Walking around [this] ... event, I was inspired by the enthusiasm of our youth because even in such a huge group, one in six of the young people there were from TBE. I knew a kid in almost every group ... that weekend."

Other important relationships take place every day at TBE in the form of congregational events. For instance, Cantor Thomas sees meaningful relationships forming each week through The Porch, TBE's Young Adults and Young Families community. The Porch offers many different entry points into synagogue life, all with the goal of helping bring individuals, couples, and families into relationships that enrich their personal Jewish meaning. "Our

Shabbat Supper Club ... is a key opportunity for people to build significant relationships," she said. "We have over 100 individuals who, as singles, couples, or families, have committed to have Shabbat dinner together with the same group of people once a month. It is incredible to me to

think that on Shabbat Supper Club night, there are no less than 10 Shabbat dinners happening throughout Charlotte where people are laughing, telling stories, and deepening their sense of Jewish purpose around the dinner table." ☆



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